

Sunday Reading.

The following touching lines from the February number of the *Link*, it may be evident to our readers are by, or concerning, our Missionary Rev. Rufus Sanford, and will, therefore, possess much interest for many:—

An Incident in Missionary Life.

"Papa! are you not coming on this ship?" With earnest tone, and deeply anxious look his little, fair-haired girl enquiringly, Not knowing well, yet somehow half-assured, Pressed home the dreaded question to his heart.

E'en then the tender's bell had loudly called; The steamship now full ready for the start, Was weighing anchor,—all must hence obey: The loved from loved ones now must part. "No, dear, I cannot go."—Then, full to brim The cup, which long before was welling up, Pressed hard the lips and suffered not, ought but

One broken whisper, low and sad,— "The Lord Bless you, my dear." A hasty, tearful kiss, And then away from her whom God in grace Had given him to cherish as his life, Till death itself should come. Away from girl,

And boy, whose innocent smiles, and truthful eyes, And gleeful tones made lighter far, the load Of care which daily on their father's thoughts Did rest.

Gang-board and ladder were withdrawn, The tender quickly sped again towards dock: The freighted ship from anchorage steamed down

The Mercy's troubled, swelling tide. Chill blew The wind. Gray, sullen clouds obscured the sun.

Fast waning day conspired with angry flood, To make a troubled scene, whose counterpart Moved wildly through the chambers of his soul:

While hourly grew the leagues of restless sea, Bearing his dear ones far away, beyond The dark Atlantic's towering waves.

Henceforth, Though hard, their paths in diverse course must run; His towards the rising, theirs the setting sun. Ah! then came clouds of doubt. The eyes grew dim.

The thoughts turned inwards on themselves: while ears Were deaf to crash, and bang, and roar, and buzz

Of stately moving commerce which, for aye, Fills all those mighty docks of Liverpool. Crowds came and went as they were daily wont.

The poor, the rich, the ragged and the trim, Each following the trend of his ideas; Slipping, jostling, stumbling, making such speed

As best he might, on sidewalks closely pressed With busy, anxious, pattering, weary feet. Street cars went rumbling on their well laid lines;

And cabs went bounding o'er the paving stones. But he, alone, his thoughts on things unseen, Saw not, or if he saw, took no concern.

On through his course along the public ways, Then up two flights of winding stairs, until He stood, and looked, a far off look, From out the window of his silent room.

"Is this the way that duty leads?"—thought he, "Oh, have we made mistake? She was so weak,

And thin, and pale! not strong enough to bear The roughness of the voyage alone, much less To have the care of trunks and children, too,

Through foreign ports, 'midst strangers all the way. Her little strength may fail completely, ere The smiling fields of lovely native land Can welcome her return; or kind friends greet

Her with the words,—"We are so glad you've come." E'en should they safely reach the spot called—"Home,"

She'll find a change. It was her own home once, But cannot be again. The cycling years Have brought new ties: have set the current of

Her thoughts and aims in unison with his. Who asked her, as his bride, to go far east, Where millions dwell in night, groping without

The light, hoping in vain, some balm to find By which to heal the malady of sin. On heathen soil with tenderness and grace, Maternal excellence which well becomes The loving Christian wife, she raised right well

That institution fair, which second to The Church of Christ is heaven-born,— "Sweet Home."

From out that well appointed place, as from A garden tilled with care, and oft refreshed By living springs, goes forth supplies

To meet recurring wants: so day by day, With natural kindness of love, went forth The helpful deed, the sympathizing word: And, best of all, the news of Gospel Grace To meet and satisfy the needs of souls,

Weak, sin-corrupted, grovelling, heathen souls; Dwelling, struggling, longing, dying through-out Those dense, dark moral wastes.

"The spirit Indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Thus spake our gracious Lord to such as we,

For well He knew what frail, weak ones we are; How soon we will beneath that eastern sun, When hardly pressed with toils and anxious cares

Beyond our natural strength. But He, so good! So thoughtful in His love! gently constrains His weary, toil-worn ones, to save their strength.

"Come ye yourselves apart . . . and rest awhile." E'en though the resting-place be not your home,

But desert-like in some respects, the Rock itself shall be your fount, and 'neath its shade Your weary souls, anon, shall be refreshed."

"But, Master, kind! how can we rest to-day? All o'er the field, as far as eye can reach, How ripe it looks! So few have come, as yet, To thrust the sickle in; will not the grain Fall prostrate to the earth? and will there not Be loss? Oh! send more men."

The shades of night Had filled his room while these and kindred thoughts Marched forth with quickened pace irregular, athwart

The vision of his soul. The die was cast. He might not rest at peace, while cries of need Came on the evening breeze, calling for his Return. On wings of steam he hasted back, Forthwith, across those ancient well-known seas,

Nor did he linger till his place was reached, Near fellow-reapers on the harvest field.

Behind the Scenes.

A SKETCH FROM REAL LIFE RESPECTING COMMUNION.

BY A PASTOR.

"I like the Baptists very much. They are a good people. But there is one thing about them that I never could understand, and that is their close communion. I can not see why they should be so narrow."

While pastor of the Baptist Church, in the city of P——, I formed the acquaintance of Sister M——, a most excellent Christian lady, a member of the Presbyterian Church. She was an elderly lady—a mother in Israel—always interested in every good work, and very fond of Christian conversation.

She was too infirm to go abroad much, and at her request, I often called at her house to talk over the interests of the Master's work, especially in our city.

One day she surprised me by alluding to our denominational differences, a matter which had never before been mentioned in our interviews. After speaking of the zeal of certain members of my church in the cause of temperance, she continued:

"I like the Baptists very much. They are a good people. But there is one thing about them I never could understand, and that is their close communion. I can not see why they should be so narrow."

Thus challenged, I thought it my duty to aid her in the solution of this very strange problem, so troublesome to so many of the dear disciples of the Master. So I said:

Do you really desire to understand our close communion?"

"Certainly I do."

"Well I think I can make it plain to you in a few moments."

"If you can I wish you would. It would be a great relief to me to know that they have a good reason for it."

"Very well I will try. You are a Presbyterian, I believe, are you not?"

"Yes sir; I have been a member of the Presbyterian Church from childhood."

"Do you fully indorse the doctrines and usages of the Presbyterian Church?"

"Certainly, sir; I am a thorough Presbyterian in all respects."

"Then you believe in the Presbyterian views and usages respecting the Lord's Supper?"

"Of course; I think they are scriptural and right."

Well, let us see if we understand those views and usages alike. Presbyterians believe and teach that the Lord's Supper is a Church ordinance, and that only those who are members of the Church in good standing are entitled to partake of it. They also believe and teach that baptized persons only are members in good standing in any gospel Church. In other words, Presbyterians hold that only such persons have a right to that table as are members, baptized members, of evangelical churches, and they invite such and such only. Am I correct in this statement of their views and practice?"

"Yes, sir; you have stated our views and practice precisely."

"And you believe them fully?"

"I do I have no doubt that they are scriptural and true!"

"Then, if I am not mistaken, you believe firmly that scriptural baptism and church-membership are prerequisites to the Lord's table: that faith is not enough to entitle anyone to appear there! and in this view you agree with the membership of the Presbyterian Church?"

"You are not mistaken. That is just what we believe and practice. We all think that a person who is not baptized, and who is not also a member in good standing in some evangelical church, ought not to go to the Lord's table. He ought first to be baptized and unite with some church, and then take the Supper."

"Exactly. And you think that those who are sprinkled are baptized, and therefore you invite them."

"To be sure we do. We accept sprinkling as valid baptism, and we regard infant sprinkling, too, as real baptism; but we do not reject immersion as baptism. We regard you Baptists as baptized believers, and we would welcome you to the Lord's table among us. Why do you not welcome us to the Lord's table in your churches?"

"Ah? that's the point precisely. But I think you can answer that question yourself. Suppose now, my sister, that you woke up some bright morning holding precisely the same views respecting admission to the Lord's table that you now hold, but firmly convinced that immersion upon a public profession of faith in the Lord Jesus is the only scriptural baptism, and that sprinkling is not baptism at all, what would you be then? What could you be but a close communion Baptist?"

"Oh, I see it at last; I see it. Of course, I should be a Baptist, and that without changing my views about communion one bit. It is close baptism that makes it seem such close communion. How much I have wronged you Baptists by my hard thoughts and cruel words about your narrowness and bigotry while it is all the while a noble, firm fidelity to principle. I hope you will forgive me, for I did it ignorantly, and rest assured I shall never again complain of close communion."

That good sister did not become a Baptist—being satisfied with her sprinkling—but she gave Baptists due credit for their integrity, in abiding the just consequences of their own convictions of Bible truth and Christian duty.

Happening in city of X—one day on business, and hearing a church bell, I dropped in, hoping to hear a sermon. I was not disappointed. The church was United Presbyterian, and the preacher (a wide awake Scotchman) delivered an inspiring sermon. In it he discoursed of Christian charity. Alluding to the Baptists, and the abuse heaped upon them as close communionists, he said:

"The Baptists are no more chargeable with close communion than are the Presbyterians. They hold, in common with us, and indeed in common with the great body of evangelical Christians, that baptism is a scriptural prerequisite to the Lord's table. They are firmly convinced that immersion only is baptism; and therefore, as honest Christians, they can not invite to that table any who have not been immersed. All honor to the Baptists for their firm maintenance of principle in the face of bitter opposition. Let no man twit them of close communion. It is not a question about communion, but about baptism. We have no controversy with them about communion. It is a controversy about baptism, and about baptism only. We think they are wrong about baptism. Let us reason with them about that, and try to convince them that they are mistaken; but let us be honest and confess that they are right about all the rest!"

As I was an entire stranger to the congregation, and to the preacher, I knew that he had not said these things to flatter me, but because he was a well informed, honest man, and loved to speak the truth.

In the beginning of my ministry, before I was ordained, I invited a Presbyterian minister to occupy my pulpit on communion Sabbath and administer the Lord's Supper, and he accepted my invitation.

There was at that time in my con-

gregation a young married man, a very recent convert, and a very zealous Christian worker. He was an Englishman, and had been sprinkled in infancy in the Church of England. Afterward he had become an avowed atheist, and was such when I first met him. At his earnest request I privately canvassed the whole ground of speculative atheism with him. I found him a sharp, trained reasoner, of a very decidedly metaphysical cast of mind, and our discussions were continued for several months. At length he was thoroughly convinced of his mistake, made a public renunciation of his atheism, sought Christ and became a very devout, earnest Christian. His talents made him very useful, and he was almost immediately made superintendent of the Sunday school, in which position he was doing good service at the time Rev. S—— came at my invitation to administer the Lord's Supper in my church. He had not united with any church, being in doubt about which one he ought to unite with. Ultimately he became a Congregationalist, and is now and has been for many years an honored and useful minister of the gospel in that denomination.

I loved him tenderly as a Christian brother, and a very dear friend, and in common with many of my brethren I greatly desired to have him sit down with us at the Lord's table. At that time I had not examined the question of communion but was governed in the matter by misguided feelings, and consequently was in favour of open communion. So I spoke to Rev. S—— confidentially, and requested him to speak to Bro H—— privately and invite him and his wife to come to the table with us. I told of his recent conversion, his zeal for Christ, and our great love for him and his estimable companion as true and devoted disciples.

Rev. S—— listened attentively until I concluded, and then said:

"Is Bro. H—— a member of any church?"

"No; he has not yet decided where he ought to unite. He has that matter now under prayerful consideration."

"Well, I can not invite him to the Lord's table. That is an ordinance of the Church, and only those who are church-members have a right to come to it."

"Oh, but he is such a good man! We all love him so much! Do, please, invite him."

"No; I cannot. As for loving him, you can love him just as well, and fellowship him just as much if he does not come to the table. The Lord's table is not to exhibit our love and fellowship for each other, but to commemorate the death of our Lord. It will be time enough for Bro. H—— to engage in the observance of this church service when he has become a member of the church."

But Bro. H—— has been baptized, he was baptized in infancy in the Church of England. Isn't that enough?"

"No, sir. The supper is a church ordinance, and it belongs, not to all who are baptized, but only to those who are baptized members of the church. Bro. H—— has been baptized but he is not a member of any church. He was baptized by a minister of the Church of England. Very well. We respect his baptism. But he was not received into the membership of the Church of England. And he does not consider himself a member of that church, or of any other, and therefore he has no right at the Lord's table, and we have no right to invite him there until he unites with some evangelical church."

And Rev. S—— was firm, and I was obliged to submit to what I then deemed a very great hardship, and a grievous wrong. But I have long since learned that Rev. S—— was right in putting the order of the Lord's house above the clamor of private affection, or personal interest and feeling.

In refusing to invite Bro. H—— to the Lord's table he acted upon strictly Presbyterian principles, and upon strict Baptist principles as well. And in support of his action he might have arrayed the standard writers and authorities of almost every denomination in Christendom. Take a few samples. Dr. Doddridge, Congregationalist, says: "It is certain that, as far as our knowledge of antiquity reaches, no unbaptized person received the Lord's Supper." (Lectures, page 551.)

How excellent soever any man's character is, he must be baptized before he can be looked upon as completely a member of the Church of Christ." (Lectures page 512.)

Richard Baxter, Congregationalist, says: "What man dare go in a way that hath neither precept nor example to warrant it, from a way that hath a full current of both; yet they that will admit members into the visible church without baptism do so." (Plain Scriptural Proof, page 24.)

Rev. Dr. Dwight, Congregationalist, says: "It is an indispensable qualification for this ordinance that the candidate for communion be a member of the visible church of Christ, in full standing. By this I intend that he should be a man of piety; that he should have made a public confession of religion, and that he should have been baptized." (Systematic Theology, Ser. 160.) Again he says (Ser. 156): "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, etc. To be born of water is to be baptized. To be born of the Spirit is to be regenerated. The kingdom of God is a phrase used in the gospel in a twofold sense, and denotes His visible and invisible kingdom, or the collection of apparent and the collection of real saints. The indispensable condition of entering the former, or visible kingdom, is here made by our Saviour, baptism. The indispensable qualification for admission into the invisible kingdom is regeneration, the great act of the Spirit of God, which constitutes men real saints. Baptism, therefore, is here made by Christ, a condition absolute to our authorized entrance into his visible Church." (Lectures, page 512.)

Rev. Dr. Hopkins, Congregationalist, says: "No one is to be considered and treated as a member of the Church of Christ unless he be baptized with water, as this is the only door by which persons can be introduced into the visible kingdom of Christ, according to his appointment." (Curtis on Com., page 125.)

Rev. F. G. Hibbard, Methodist Episcopal, says (Christian Baptism, page 174, Second Part): "Before entering upon the argument before us, it is but just to remark that, in one principle, the Baptist and Pedobaptist churches agree. They both agree in rejecting from the communion at the table of the Lord, and in denying the rights of church-fellowship to all who have not been baptized. Valid baptism, they consider, is essential to constitute visible church-membership. This also we hold. The only question, then, that here divides us is, What is essential to valid baptism? The Baptists, in passing the sweeping sentence of disfranchisement upon all other Christian churches, have only acted upon a principle held in common with all other Christian churches, viz.: that baptism is essential to church-membership. They have denied our baptism, and, as unbaptized persons, we have been excluded from their table. That they err greatly in their views of Christian baptism we of course believe. But, according to their views of baptism, they certainly are consistent in restricting thus their communion. We would not be understood as passing a judgment of approval upon their course, but we say their views of baptism force them upon the ground of strict communion, and herein they act upon the same principles as other churches, i. e., they admit only those whom they deem baptized persons to the communion table. Of course they must be their own judges of what baptism is. It is evident that, according to our views of baptism, we can admit them to our communion; but with their views of baptism it is equally evident that they can never reciprocate the courtesy. And the charge of close communion is no more applicable to the Baptists than to us, inasmuch as the question of church-fellowship with them is determined by as liberal principles as it is with any other Protestant churches, so far, I mean, as the present subject is concerned, i. e., it is determined by valid baptism."

Dr. Wall, Episcopal, says (Hist. Infant Baptism, Part II, Chap. 9): "No church ever gave the communion to any persons before they were baptized. Among all the absurdities that ever were held, none ever maintained that any person should partake of the communion before he was baptized."

(To be continued.)

Booth's Department.

Original and Selected.
Scripture Enigma.

No. 212.

A Double Acrostic.

When John of Revelation saw
The New Jerusalem,
Its walls of precious stones were made:
My first is one of them.
If of my next my name you'd find,
Seek for a prophet old,
Who in God's service ever was
Humble, yet brave and bold.
My third you'll find to be the name
Of a patriarch's son, first-born,
My fourth a priest and scribe who to
Jerusalem returned.
When, in the days of old, "God spake
And it was done." I pray
Set for my fifth something he made
Upon the fourth good day.
Ahasuerus reigned, you know,
O'er land of wide extent.
My sixth will name how far to east
His territory went.
Saul's second son will give the name
To fill the seventh place;
My eighth a prophesied of old
Renowned for Godly grace.
What judge and prophet long ago
Of God's own will would know?
That prophet's mother's name will then
My ninth and last word show.

What prophet of the living God once stood,
Having about his neck a yoke of wood?

What prophet, false to God and man
then broke
From off his neck that symbol wooden
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